

## The Failure of Pedestrian Malls & the Success of Shared Streets:

In the 1960's and 70's, over 200 pedestrian malls were built throughout the U.S. Since then, 85% of pedestrian malls have been converted back to vehicular oriented streets<sup>1</sup> because pedestrian malls decrease visibility and access to retail and disrupt traffic flow. "Shared Space" is an urban design approach that allows for a pedestrian oriented street while retaining vehicular access. Shared streets achieve what pedestrian malls sought to realize, "getting people out of their cars and interacting with the environment."<sup>2</sup> Yet, in contrast to pedestrian malls, shared streets have seen success because they retain vital connectivity with the rest of the urban grid.

### The Failure of Pedestrian Malls:

- In 1959, the **Kalamazoo Mall** became the country's first pedestrian mall, characterized as "blocks of public downtown streets designated for pedestrian-only use and closed to vehicular traffic."<sup>3</sup> Subsequently, two-hundred pedestrian malls were built across the U.S.<sup>4</sup>
- In 1998, the **Kalamazoo Mall reopened to automobile traffic** because the street retailers were suffering, with similar stories seen throughout the U.S.
  - "Vacancy rates soared [on pedestrian malls], and pedestrians using the [malls] found themselves walking among boarded up shops or former department stores that had been downgraded to thrift shops or other low-rent operations...**automobiles drive retail.**" –Randal O'Toole, Senior Fellow at the Cato Institute, *NYTimes*<sup>5</sup>
- Approximately **85% of pedestrian malls once in existence in American cities failed** and eventually reopened to traffic, including malls in cities such as Baltimore, Chicago, Philadelphia, Pittsburg, Pasadena, Burbank, Raleigh, Portland, Little Rock and Tampa.
  - In Philly, when the city's pedestrian mall reopened to vehicles in 2000, \$25/SF rents increased to \$65/SF and several national chains moved in, such as Sephora, H&M and West Elm.<sup>6</sup>
  - In Oak Park, Illinois, Lake Street's sales went up 15-20% and vacancy rates dropped from 25% to 5% once cars were reintroduced to the street.<sup>7</sup>



*Kalamazoo Pedestrian Mall*

### The Success of Shared Streets:

"Shared Space," envisioned by Dutch traffic engineer Hans Monderman, is an urban design approach that integrates sidewalks and traffic lanes by minimizing curbing and traffic control devices. The absence of such features allows for a **pedestrian oriented street while retaining vehicular access, a vital element of connectivity with the urban grid.**



*Exhibition Road*

- **Exhibition Road, London, England**
  - Exhibition Road, London's cultural artery, was once a congested thoroughway avoided by most pedestrians. In 2011, it became a "shared space" with a curbless surface. It is now used by drivers, cyclists and pedestrians.<sup>8</sup>
    - "Crowds can flow more happily over the paving, and the route...is now a pleasure. The road is a place where you might want to be, rather than just a means of getting somewhere else. It is not fussy and prescriptive..." – Rowan Moore, *The Guardian*<sup>9</sup>

<sup>1</sup> <http://downtowndevelopment.com/pdf/americanpedmallexperiment.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> [http://nacto.org/docs/usdg/revisiting\\_pedestrian\\_malls\\_scmidt.pdf](http://nacto.org/docs/usdg/revisiting_pedestrian_malls_scmidt.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> [http://nacto.org/docs/usdg/revisiting\\_pedestrian\\_malls\\_scmidt.pdf](http://nacto.org/docs/usdg/revisiting_pedestrian_malls_scmidt.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> *No Better Way? The Kalamazoo Mall and the Legacy of Pedestrian Malls*, Michael Cheyne. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5342/michhistrevi.36.1.103>

<sup>5</sup> *Pedestrian Malls: Back to the Future*. [http://roomfordebate.blogs.nytimes.com/2009/02/27/pedestrian-malls-back-to-the-future/comment-page-1/?\\_r=0](http://roomfordebate.blogs.nytimes.com/2009/02/27/pedestrian-malls-back-to-the-future/comment-page-1/?_r=0)

<sup>6</sup> *The Experiment of American Pedestrian Malls*, Downtown Fresno Partnership. <http://downtowndevelopment.com/pdf/americanpedmallexperiment.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> *The Experiment of American Pedestrian Malls*, Downtown Fresno Partnership. <http://downtowndevelopment.com/pdf/americanpedmallexperiment.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2011/nov/11/london-exhibition-road-cultural>

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2012/jan/29/exhibition-road-rowan-moore-review>

- **Winthrop Street, Cambridge, MA**



Winthrop Street

- The city of Cambridge converted Winthrop Street into a shared street in 2007. Using a flush curb, the street now accommodates pedestrians, bicycles, outdoor diners and motorists.<sup>10</sup>

- “Shared streets in Cambridge have transformed the public space, integrating and balancing commercial uses, street performers, restaurant activity and transportation using an aesthetically pleasing design” –*Urban Street Design Guide*, National Association of City Transportation<sup>11</sup>



Winthrop Street

- **Wall Street, Asheville, NC**

- A former delivery alley in the historic district of Asheville, Wall Street has been transformed into a shared, curbsless street.
  - Wall Street is home to several businesses, coffee shops and restaurants and is a boutique downtown retail district.<sup>12</sup> Residential and office uses sit above the ground floor retail.

- Other examples of shared streets include **Linden Street** in San Francisco, **Cady’s Alley** in Washington, D.C., **16<sup>th</sup> Street** in Jamaica Queens, NY and **Davis and Flanders Streets** in Portland, Oregon.<sup>13</sup>

- **The benefits of shared streets:**

- **Cars drive slowly.** The concept is based on risk compensation theory, which means that humans drive faster and less cautiously in safe environments than they do along streets with impediments.<sup>14</sup>
  - **Retail is accessible and visible by vehicles.** Studies show that rents increase and vacancy rates decrease when a street is accessible to vehicles.<sup>15</sup>
  - **Pedestrians control the street.** Shared streets are designed to “implicitly slow traffic speeds using pedestrian volumes, design and other cues.”<sup>16</sup> As a result, they reduce the number of accidents compared to regular streets and provide ample crossing opportunities for pedestrians, creating a pleasurable pedestrian experience.<sup>17</sup>



Wall Street

### Neal Place—A Shared Street:

Numerous scholarly articles and historical precedents reveal the failure of pedestrian malls and the success of shared streets. Such evidence confirms that Neal Place must be accessible by vehicular traffic in order to be a thriving retail destination. The shared streets concept provides a model to introduce vehicular traffic in a way that will ensure that pedestrians are safe and control the street.

Additionally, introducing cars to Neal Place will break up the large super block that spans from Morse Street to Penn Street between 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> Streets. This once again will stitch the urban grid back together by connecting the Western portion of Neal Place to 6<sup>th</sup> Street.

<sup>10</sup> <http://nacto.org/case-study/cambridge-shared-streets/>

<sup>11</sup> <http://nacto.org/publication/urban-street-design-guide/>

<sup>12</sup> <http://www.smgov.net/uploadedFiles/Departments/PCD/Plans/Bergamot-Area-Plan/Shared-Space-Streets.pdf>

<sup>13</sup> <http://www.nyc.gov/html/dot/downloads/pdf/2015-01-willoughby-existing-conditions.pdf>

<sup>14</sup> [https://www.allianz.com/en/about\\_us/open-knowledge/topics/mobility/articles/120416-why-making-streets-risky-improves-road-safety.html/](https://www.allianz.com/en/about_us/open-knowledge/topics/mobility/articles/120416-why-making-streets-risky-improves-road-safety.html/)

<sup>15</sup> *The Experiment of American Pedestrian Malls*, Downtown Fresno Partnership.

<http://downtowndevelopment.com/pdf/americanpedmallexperiment.pdf>

<sup>16</sup> <http://nacto.org/publication/urban-street-design-guide/streets/commercial-shared-street/>

<sup>17</sup> [https://www.allianz.com/en/about\\_us/open-knowledge/topics/mobility/articles/120416-why-making-streets-risky-improves-road-safety.html/](https://www.allianz.com/en/about_us/open-knowledge/topics/mobility/articles/120416-why-making-streets-risky-improves-road-safety.html/)